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DAGGER'S EDGE

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







"The Greatest Brigade Combat Team Ever Formed"










DAGGER'S EDGE

What Makes it Great

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★ ★ ★ ★ Question Of the Week ★ ★ ★ ★

"What are you going to do on R & R?"

299th FSB	1-5 CAV	C 101 MI	299th FSB	1-5 CAV
Spc Alvaro Camacho	PV2 Michael Monk	Spc Roberta Lathan	Pfc Joshua Scott	Spc Randal Stokes
				
"Relax, spend time with my family, and do some traveling in Germany."	"Catch up with family and the developments since my deployment."	"I want to go to an amusement park."	"I would like to go home and spend time with my family."	"I would like to get caught up with all family and friends."

Picture Credits

(Cover Page) Sgt. 1st Class Genaro Hernandez, 2nd platoon Charlie battery, 1-7 FA, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div., takes a knee and observes for suspicious individuals attempting to enter the area while platoon members interact with locals. (US Army photo by Sgt. Patrick Prewitt, Charlie battery, 1st Bn., 7th Field Artillery Reg., 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.)





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Not a Day Off

Story By CH (Capt.) Steve Mickel



During January we celebrated New Year. We enjoyed some good food, special worship services, and simply wishing people a happy New Year. January is also the month Martin Luther King, Jr. born in 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia. His father was the minister of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, as was his father before him. His birthday has become a national holiday. The theme of this holiday is, "A day on, not a day off," and this certainly applies to Iraq where the mission can't wait for everyone to have a day off!

'M.L.,' as he was called, lived with his parents, his sister and brother in Atlanta, Ga. Their home was not far from the church his father preached. M.L.'s mother and father taught their children what would become an important part of Martin's life - to treat all people with respect. His father worked hard to break down the barriers between the races, and he believed African-Americans should register their complaints by voting.

As M.L. grew up he found that not everyone followed his parent's principles. He noticed that black people and white people were treated differently. He saw that he and his white friends could not drink from the same water fountains and could not use the same restrooms.


Martin's best friend as a child was a white boy and as children they played happily together. But when they

reached school age the friends found that even though they lived in the same neighborhood, they could not go to the same school. His friend would go to a school for white children only, and M.L. was sent to a school for black children. After the first day of school, M.L. and his friend were never allowed to play together again.

When M.L. was ready for college he decided to follow his father and become a minister. While attending the Crozer Theological seminary in Pennsylvania he became familiar with Mahatma Gandhi, who had struggled to free the people of India from British rule by "peaceful revolution."

Of course, M.L. became a leader in the civil rights movement. He pushed for freedom and equal rights among all races, and he eventually gave his life for this cause.

This reminds me of why we are in Iraq. Some Soldiers say they are here to fight for their country and freedom, others for their families. Still others are here for the adventure or college money. No matter what our personal reasons for being here are, we have all agreed to do this even if it involves the ultimate sacrifice. As a Chaplain, I feel privileged to work with other people who have made such a commitment to be here in Iraq. I can talk with Soldiers in a confidential manner and help them to solve personal problems before situations worsen. This can be very rewarding when I see someone begin to make his or her life better.

God wants us to make our lives better. God's word says all people are equal regardless of gender or race. He wants all of us to be involved with Him. This is why He came as a man and suffered and died for our sins. He wants to lift our burdens and adopt us into His family. If you sincerely ask Him to come into your heart and forgive your sins, He will begin to guide your life in a new way and give you a true freedom to which nothing else can compare! God does not take a single day off in His mission to bring us to Him. We just need to accept His help for this to work. God bless you! 





DAGGER'S EDGE



9th Engineers First to Cross

Religious Support Team, Task Force 9th Engineer

Story by Spc. Ian M. Harris

This New Year the Religious Support Team (RST) of 9th Engineer Battalion, had much to celebrate; to include providing over 100 services to Catholic Soldiers since their deployment began.

Chaplain (Capt.) Thomas Kirchhoefer is one of only a handful of Catholic Priests working in the Baghdad footprint, making his responsibility greater than the average Battalion Chaplain. His mission is to provide religious support and pastoral care to the Soldiers of 9th Eng. Bn, as well as to help provide Catholic services at over 26 different Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) within MND-B.

Every Monday, the Catholic Chaplains gather together and work out a schedule to cover each location. The 9th Eng. Bn, Task Force Gila, RST is tasked with an average of six services per week. This includes services at FOB



Chaplain (Capt.) Thomas Kirchhoefer (left), of 9th Engineer Battalion, performs Catholic Mass at FOB Rustimiyah, with Polish Soldiers in attendance. (Photo by Spc. Ian M. Harris)

Falcon and FOB Justice, homes to 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, and Task Force Justice, which are both members of the Dagger Brigade. The movement of an RST requires detailed planning by the Chaplain Assistants. The assistant spends his days tracking flight requests for services off the Victory Complex Area and arranging ground transportation for those places they could reach by driving.

The Task Force Gila RST confesses the rewards of their job usually overshadow the work put into making it happen. During this holiday season they provided as many services in one day as they usually provide in a week. On Christmas, what would have been an overwhelming schedule turned into one of the most rewarding days of their deployment so far.

Their final service Christmas evening was at FOB Ludifiyah, which required a trip in a UH-60 (Blackhawk) Helicopter. By the time they left, the sun had set and

(Gila...Continued on page 11)



Chaplain (Capt.) Thomas Kirchhoefer (center), of 9th Engineer, Battalion, exchanges the sign of peace at the FOB Slayer Chapel. (US Army Photo by Spc. Ian M. Harris)

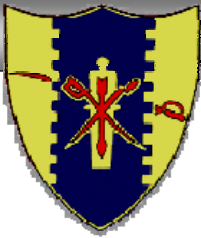




DAGGER'S EDGE

Transitioning Security

Story by Capt. William Schoenfeld



2nd BCT BRT Renegades

Troop E, 4th Cavalry's primary mission, while deployed to Iraq, is to transition the security responsibilities over the local population to the Iraqi Army (IA). The Brigade Reconnaissance Troop has conducted numerous training events with its Iraqi partnership Battalion, 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army, and has seen a vast improvement in the IA's tactical and technical proficiencies. The BRT has received the best results by going out on the road with the IA and conducting joint American-Iraqi patrols.

On the 15th of January, 2007 the Second Platoon of Troop E, 4th Cav. conducted a joint patrol with Company B, of the 3rd Bn, 5th Bde, 6th Iraqi Army. The patrol consisted of mounted and dismounted patrols through the Al-Jamia and Al-Hateen neighborhoods of Bagdad, Iraq. The Soldiers of the Co. B are a motivated group of Iraqis that want to see a better future for their country.

The platoon leader for the mission, Capt. Brian Weightman, conducted a patrol



Capt. Brian Weightman conducts a patrol brief with 3/5/6 IA soldiers. (US Army photo by Capt. William Schoenfeld)



Staff Sgt. Robert Jerow and Capt. Brian Weightman conduct a patrol brief with 3/5/6 IA soldiers. (US Army photo by Capt. William Schoenfeld)

brief with the Iraqi soldiers, at the 3/5/6 IA compound, to explain the rules of engagement (ROE) and the need to show respect for all members of the local population. The Iraqi soldiers listened attentively and provided positive feedback to Capt. Weightman. Following the patrol brief, the Soldiers of the BRT presented a new map of the surrounding area to the commander of the 3/5/6 IA.

During the patrol, the local residents waved hello and cheered at the sight of the Iraqi Army working alongside the BRT. Many of the local residents told the troops' interpreter they felt more secure knowing that the soldiers of 3/5/6 IA were on the streets preventing sectarian attacks in their neighborhood. Throughout the patrol, Capt. Weightman and the Iraqi patrol leader communicated through radios and an interpreter. Capt. Weightman pointed out several areas of interest to the IA patrol, and the IA soldiers responded with great appreciation.

The patrol concluded where it began, at the Iraqi Army compound. The BRT and the IA conducted an after action review of the day's patrol and identified several areas in the neighborhood that they wanted to focus on during their next joint patrol.





DAGGER'S EDGE



1-5 Cavalry Knights

From Ground Zero to Baghdad

Story by Cpl. John Androski

The comment 'do you know where you were when JFK was shot,' once registered with all of America. For the contemporary era of Americans this statement does not resonate with as much power, emotion and imagination as asking the current generation of Americans 'where were you on September 11, 2001' one such individual who will never forget where he was on that faithful day is Maj. John Maguire.



Carrying the former Chaplin of the NYCFD, Father Mychal Judge are members of the New York City Fire department (NYCFD) with Maj. John Maguire second from the right. (Photo by Shannon Stapleton)

Maguire is a 1995 West Point graduate and former Armor Officer who currently serves as the leader of a Civil Affairs team attached to 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry (1-5 CAV). Maguire was, at the time, employed at Goldman Sachs, a brokerage house in the financial district of New York City. Goldman Sachs's headquarters was stationed across from building #2 of the World Trade Center or better known now as Ground Zero. Upon the first impact of the first plane, Maguire exited his building and immediately began helping in the evacuation of injured citizens in and around the World Trade Center complex.

One of his many actions that morning captured forever on film was the picture of him and four New York City firefighters helping to extract the body of Father Mychal Judge, the former Chaplain of the New York City Fire Department who was the

first recorded victim (NO. 0001) of the World Trade Center attack.

Maguire's honorable actions that morning in helping to recover the fallen Chaplain body from the rubble has become an icon for not only the city of New York but all people who put the concerns of others above themselves both professionally and personally.

Maguire continues to dedicate his actions to the service of others by service as the lead Civil Military liaison to 1-5 CAV. Commonly known by his handle 'Money-Maker,' Maguire has worked to improve the lives of thousands of individuals within 1-5 CAV area of operations, which encompasses the Baghdad neighborhoods of Ameriya, Khadra, Adl and Hateen. With Maguire's leadership, 1-5 CAV has been able to foster greater trust in local governance initiatives and create the conditions for increased economic development.

The actions of John Maguire are consistent with the highest principals of duty, honor, and country. His immediate assistance to his countrymen on 9/11 and to his continued service to his country as a Soldier in Iraq is a model to all Soldiers.

So in remembering 9/11, we will never forget where we were nor will we forget the actions of John Maguire and how he put himself at risk to help others who continue to inspire this generation and the generations to follow.





DAGGER'S EDGE



299th FSB Lifeline

Bandits Improve Customer Support with Better Work Areas

Story by Capt. Michael McCarty

Bravo Company, 299th Forward Support Battalion is always looking for ways to improve their work areas and customer support; very often the two go hand in hand. The driving force behind most of the improvements Bravo has made is Chief Warrant Officer 3 Darrel Horton of

Gibsonville, North Carolina and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jimmie Cantrell of Warrensburg, Missouri.

Not only can these two Warrant Officers fix just about anything in the Army's inventory, they are constantly brainstorming and finding ways to resource improvements. Their improvements are not limited to Bravo Company, but also support the battalion's overall mission. Some of these projects include a battalion wash rack, installing a culvert for the battalion convoy staging area, designing and building a loading dock for Direct Support maintenance, and the procurement and erection of a clam shell maintenance enclosure.

One of the first projects the warrant officers worked on was a wash rack for 299th Forward Support Battalion. The previous



Bravo's loading dock (US Army photo by Capt. Mike McCarty)

unit had acquired a tank and pump unit for the wash rack but were washing muddy vehicles in a mud pit. The two Chiefs quickly came up with a solution. They used the spade on a M88 Heavy Recovery Vehicle to excavate a trench angled for drainage. Once the trench was made they put concrete T-walls in the trench to give the wash rack a hard surface free of mud to wash the Battalions vehicles on. Not only does the Battalion use the wash rack to clean their



Bandits begin to erect the main beams of the clam shell. (US Army photo by Capt. Mike McCarty)

organizational equipment, Direct Support uses it to clear grime and mud away from major assemblies such as engines and transmissions before they fix or replace them.

On Dec. 21, CW3 Darrel Horton and CW3 Jimmie Cantrell emplaced a 15 inch culvert in 299th Forward Support Battalion's Convoy Staging Area (CSA). 299th FSB uses this CSA to prepare vehicles and personnel for Combat Logistics Patrols throughout the 2nd Brigade Combat Team's area of operations. In almost every one of these CLPs there are 5000-gallon fuel trailers and commercial semi-trailers loaded with food which Company A Soldiers

(Lifeline...Continued on page 8)





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(Lifeline...Continued from page 7)

deliver to outlying Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). The road at the exit of the CSA is one foot higher than the CSA resulting in a deep ditch. This posed a problem for the fuel and food trailers when exiting the CSA. The trailers' rear end would drag on the ground resulting in unneeded wear and tear to the equipment. In addition, when it would rain, the weight of the equipment created huge ruts making it more difficult to exit the CSA and blocking the drainage ditch, further multiplying the mud and rut problem. Lt. Col. Keith Sledd, the 299th FSB Battalion Commander, noted the difficulty presented by this sharp incline running directly across the path of exiting vehicles and procured a culvert capable of supporting the heaviest vehicles in the battalion. Chiefs Horton and Cantrell approached the job with their customary zeal. Using a Small Excavating Equipment (SEE) truck and a 10k ATLAS forklift, they excavated a trench and laid the pipe. Then, using materials procured off-site, they graveled over the trench, leaving a smooth, even surface for vehicles to drive over, and set concrete Jersey barriers at each edge to guide vehicles across.

Bravo Company has 15 shop trailers and shelters that base maintenance shops work out of everyday. At the back of each of these shops are four foot tall ladders that must be climbed to enter. Most customers visit each of the shops daily to pick up or drop off equipment. That is a lot of stairs, and when it rains, the stairs can get very slippery and dangerous. CW3 Cantrell identified the problem and designed a loading dock with a metal frame and a wooden deck that would meet the needs of handling the weight and traffic of daily business. The metal frame was constructed by Bravo's Service and Recovery section and the wooden decking was laid by Bravo's Armament Section. The loading dock extends a total of 160 feet and is 6 feet wide. The base shops now have common access and customers and members of Bravo only have one set of stairs to climb.

The latest ongoing improvement in Bravo's work area is the clam shell maintenance enclosure. When Bravo took over their work area in the motor pool they were left an uncovered 100 foot by 50 foot concrete pad to perform vehicle maintenance on. The pad was barren without any over head cover or structure to block the brutal desert sun and



CW3 Cantrell (operating the SEE) begins to install the 15 inch culvert. (US Army photo by Capt. Mike McCarty)

elements. The clam shell filled all the criteria Bravo was looking for. The clam shell was spotted by Cantrell and Horton in the fair wear and tear yard on Camp Liberty. The armament section with the guidance of Cantrell assembled the structure on the ground and then the two Warrant Officers, with the assistance of various sections from Bravo, began to erect the structure. Currently, the remaining structural beams are being erected and upon completion the canvas will be installed. This will give Bravo's automotive section a work area that is covered thus blocking the sun and elements.

These are just a few examples of the improvements Bravo Company has made to their work area. Obviously Cantrell and Horton are great individuals to have on the Bandits' Team. Their ingenuity and imagination has become a vital tool for the battalion thereby improving the customer interface and the quality of support the 2nd Dagger Brigade Combat Team receives from the Bravo Bandits and the Lifeline Battalion. 🇺🇸





DAGGER'S EDGE



Task Force Justice
"...Tested in the
Crucible of
Combat."

Times of Surge, Transition, and Support

Story By 1st Lt. Cassidy Eaves

The winds of change are sweeping across western Baghdad and Task Force Justice is in the eye of the storm. The recent executive decision to increase troop levels has required units to find or simply make

room for incoming units. In addition to the troop surge, Task Force Justice will facilitate the relief in place of Military and National Police Training Teams, with whom we share the post.

The Mayor's Cell has been tracking the utilization of every square inch of the base in order to maximize our capacity without hindering capability. Staff Sgt. Brian Huntley serves as the hub of information continuously monitoring convoys, air traffic, and room occupancy. Formerly directing artillery rounds, Huntley has found his calling as a hotel manager.



Staff Sgt. Brian Huntley, operations NCOIC and Spc. Charles Booska, the armorer, ponder accommodation solutions for Soldiers arriving later in the day. (US Army photo by 1st Lt. Cassidy Eaves)



Staff Sgt. Harold Weber, Project Manager, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, and Spc. Matthew Stow, Fuel Supply Specialist, Headquarters Company, 9th Engineer Battalion, ensure concrete barriers are properly positioned around Soldier living quarters. (US Army photo by 1st Lt. Cassidy Eaves)

We are adding more living and office space to the post. Staff Sgt. Harold Weber and Cpl. William Huffman oversee work sites daily and ensure local workers meet project standards. These additions will give the task force flexibility in the accommodation of numerous drifters and special guests, who tend to be drawn to FOB Justice. We recently hosted Michelle Malkin and Bryan Preston, cofounders of the

website Hotair.com. Marc Santora from the New York Times paid us another visit as well. FOB Justice maintains a hub of activity and draws the likes of senior leaders like General Casey, in addition to numerous others.

The Combined Operations & Intelligence Center (COIC) has made coordination for the lodging and logistical support of a wide array of incoming units. Captains Marty Rafter, Nate Dolce, Aaron Kaufman, and Eddie Vargas have put forth an exhausting effort to make certain that newcomers ease into operations in Baghdad. Their relentless phone calls and site recons have paid off as those now enroute will have a place to hang their helmet and park their humvee.

Though it is a time of fast paces and new faces, the one constant at

(Justice...Continued on page 13)





DAGGER'S EDGE



1-7 FA First Lightning

Lightning Soldiers Provide Security for Camp Liberty

Story by Capt. Aaron Scheinman

Soldiers of Task Force Lightning's Inner Perimeter Patrol (IPP) have been busy providing security to Camp Liberty and its tenant units. Covering an area approximately twice the size of downtown Schweinfurt, Camp Liberty is not only home for 12,500 Soldiers, to include the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, but for over 500 American and foreign contractors who provide essential services for the base's population and vast infrastructure.

The IPP, composed of 3rd Platoon, Charlie Battery and COLT Platoon, Headquarters Battery, continuously patrols Camp Liberty, conducting vehicle searches, ID checks, and area sweeps of high occupancy facilities, such as the dining facilities, PX, and MWR centers, and the camp's vital areas including the water bottling plant, power plant, and two detention facilities.

In addition to providing around the clock security, the IPP serves as a quick reaction force, to be called on to execute a variety of missions. Some of these missions involve providing additional combat power to units oper-



Spc. Vannaxay Thirakourne, from Mountain Lake, Minnesota, uses a BISA card reader to check an identification card at the PX. COLT Platoon Soldiers conduct spot checks around Camp Liberty to ensure residents are in compliance with established force protection measures. (US Army photo by 1st Lt. Kelly Norris)

ating outside the wire, such as escorting Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams to dispose of roadside bombs discovered in sector.

Recently, the IPP took part in Operation Mr. Clean, a joint American and Iraqi operation aimed at clearing overgrown reeds along a main road outside Camp Liberty's walls which were disrupting patrols' ability to spot roadside bombs.

The IPP, led by 1st Lt. Kelly Norris, helped provide security with a platoon from 3/6 Iraqi Army, while Soldiers of the 20th Engineer Battalion scoured the road shoulder clean of overgrown foliage.

In addition to its standard duties, the IPP led two internal security operations. These deliberate, planned operations were aimed at inspecting the living quarters of Liberty's civilian contractors and searching for prohibited or potentially dangerous items. Soldiers of the IPP, together with members of Service Battery, Company E, 134th BSB, and the 38th Military Police conducted detailed searches of

(First Lightning...Continued on page 11)



Spc. Scott Gregory from Hudson, New York, looks out for vehicles approaching his checkpoint on Camp Liberty. Charlie Battery, 3rd Platoon Soldiers establish checkpoints periodically to conduct random security checks on Camp Liberty. (US Army photo by 1st Lt. Kelly Norris)






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(Gila...Continued from page 4)


the thousands of lights that cover the houses and streets of Baghdad rushed by beneath them, not quite the same as a Christmas light show at home, but it was almost as good.

The plan was to fly back to Camp Liberty after only two hours on the ground, but as that time came and went the RST found out their flight would be pushed back a full day. Without missing a beat Chaplain Kirchhoefer took advantage of his extra time with the Soldiers at FOB Ludifiyah. Whether they were celebrating Christmas Mass, hand in hand with a small group of Soldiers, spending time at their motor pool, visiting them at the guard towers, or watching a movie with them, the Gila RST helped make that day as special as possible for the Soldiers at FOB Ludifiyah.

The Task Force Gila RST has been an integral part in providing services to hundreds of Catholic Soldiers during their deployment. This mission gives Catholic Soldiers an opportunity to practice their faith, to experience fellowship, and to stay spiritually strong while they continue with operations in Iraq. With four months of experience doing services in the Baghdad area, the 9th Engineer Battalion RST is more than ready to continue that mission. 

(First Lightning...Continued from page 10)

AAFES village, the living quarters of PX employees, and Gulf Coast Catering Company village, home to dining facility employees from India and Pakistan.

With dignity and respect for all residents, Soldiers looked for contraband such as alcohol, drugs, or even pets, and prohibited items that could potentially be used against Coalition Forces, ranging from digital cameras, cell phones, data collection hardware, weapons and explosives. Both operations were conducted swiftly and professionally, and were effective in enforcing force protection compliance standards of Camp Liberty tenants. These 1st Bn, 7th Field Artillery Soldiers are disciplined, flexible, vigilant, and always on call to protect and secure the Army's home away from home. 



**2-12 Cavalry
Thunder Horse**

Night Patrols Keep the Peace

Story by 2nd Lt. Mike Daschel

On the night of Jan. 4th, Soldiers of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment staged near the Mujahareen Mosque in Northern Ghazaliya in response to violence there the previous night.


After patrolling the area around the mosque that had been the scene of violence the night before, the patrol staged themselves in an abandoned house in a neighborhood nearby. The house was clear of people; only a few belongings and pieces of furniture were left behind in what was likely another example of Iraqi people fleeing

the violence of Baghdad.

The house itself was among the nicer houses in Baghdad. It had a large roof area for the Soldiers, from which they were able to observe the city.

"This house would be at least a quarter-million [dollars] in the states," observed 1st Lt. Sam Car-tee, platoon leader of the unit staying the house.

The Soldiers built a fire in the house's courtyard to help make their presence be known to the surrounding neighborhood.

After six hours of observing from the house, the patrol returned to Camp Liberty. There were no incidents that required a response from these forward staged Soldiers. 





DAGGER'S EDGE

Bravo Tank Giving Back

Story by 1st Lt. Tim Evers

**1-26 Infantry
Blue Spaders**

From an armored HMWWV weighed down with a full combat load for five Soldiers and the truck's .50 caliber machine gun, Sgt. Matthew Campell of Seattle, Washington, reaches inside the vehicle and pulls out a soccer ball and bag of food. He hands the bag of food to a large man in his fifties who cares for a family of five, providing for them the best he can in means of food and safety.

Meanwhile Sgt. Kevin Terry hands a soccer ball to a young boy about eight years old wearing a Nike knit cap. Eagerly, the boy takes the ball in one hand and tugs at him with his other hand to get them in on a game of soccer with his brothers. The Soldiers could not refuse a game of soccer with a kid so enthusiastic. While the leaders talk to the leaders of that small community, a game of soccer ensues. The community elders discussed concerns about electricity and poverty, as well as discussing how the area was generally safe. Sgt. Terry called for a medic. One of the boys, wearing sandals instead of shoes, injured his foot in an attempt to score on the Americans, so Doc was called over. After he was patched up, the boy seemed to be more excited the about treatment than the soccer ball, the Soldiers of Razor Platoon bid their farewells and find another neighborhood in need of their assistance.



A young Iraqi soccer player tries to score a goal on two American Soldiers. (US Army photo by 1st Lt. Tim Evers)



Spc. Med "Doc" Uddin and Sgt. Kevin Terry fix up an Iraqi boy who hurt his foot playing soccer. (US Army photo by 1st Lt. Tim Evers)

This occasion was one of many experienced by the Mortar Platoon of 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, as well as other platoons of Company B, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, the Regulars.

Since their arrival in Baghdad last September, many Regulators have gotten to know the locals in their patrol sectors a lot better and have wanted to do things to help them through the winter months, as well as show gratitude for providing them information leading to insurgent captures.

"Some of the communities that border the river are extremely poor; no heat and no running water," says Sgt. Matthew Campbell, of the conditions, "but they are some of the people who cause us the least problems."

Some of the people along the river actually live in mud huts and many of them and their children are living with illnesses or deformities from birth defects.

Other families in these poor communities were forced to move out of their homes due to threats from militias of different religious sects.

Since many of these problems are prevalent throughout the rest of the 1st Bn, 26th Inf. Reg., area of operations, generators, food

(Blue Spaders...Continued on page 13)





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(Blue Spaders...Continued from page 12)


kits, and blankets were ordered for hundreds of these families by the Blue Spaders as a gesture of good will. Large amounts of humanitarian aid were arranged by each company throughout the Task Force; however, the Regulators did not stop at that. The Regulators use many different tactics in keeping their sector safe for the locals, as well as for themselves and other units traveling through it. They go house to house, knocking on doors and greeting the owners with a handshake and a friendly gesture. These face to face meetings have developed an atmospheric database of the community and have helped the Regulators confiscate numerous illegal weapons, as well as lead to the capture of many suspected insurgent cell leaders.

"You'll go into some houses that are really nice, where the family is watching MTV and surfing the internet. But more often than not, you'll stumble upon a family of 10 living in a one room apartment with no heat or electricity. That is where these blankets and food kits come in handy," says Sgt. Jose Esparza-Ponce, of Fresno, California, from the Hell Raiser Platoon.

The Soldiers do not hand out food to any specific location, but to households or small communities that are deemed more underprivileged than the others.

"We'll see a family and ask them about the neighborhood, whether it's safe, how the electricity is and so on. Then we'll tell them, 'by the way, it's cold, here are some blankets and food.' They never decline and always smile," explains Sgt. Christopher Leota, of Tafuna Am, Samoa.


Although security for the Iraqi people is paramount, humanitarian aid can be one of the most gratifying missions for Soldiers that involve interacting with the Iraqi people. Food kits, blankets, soccer balls, and school supplies are all received by the Iraqis with gratitude, and it has a positive affect on the Soldiers as well.

"It's great seeing the eyes light up on the face of a kid when you give him a soccer ball, or the smile from a father of 5 kids, when you give them a blanket," explains Pfc. Daniel Hicks of Headquarters Platoon, "When you change the lives of an entire family, even in a small way, there's definitely a rewarding feeling to it." 

(Justice...Continued from page 9)

FOB Justice is the support team. Cooks, medics, and mechanics consistently provide disciplined, quality service to their brothers and sisters in arms.

As we bid farewell to many training teams, new ones will take their place. Some teams will travel from across Iraq to join us. Through it all, the Steel Knights, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, provide security and services on the FOB and throughout the battlefield. Their quick reaction force has helped many units in distress, and the MP platoon continues to transit the area of operations with missions too numerous to recount. These Soldiers continue to uphold the legacy of the Big Red One and demonstrate the fortitude that will be described in history books to their grand children.

As one may gather by reading above, it takes everyone – the entire team at Task Force Justice. This is what makes serving here so special. We look forward to incorporating the incoming units into the epic venture that lays before us in Baghdad. We thank you for keeping us in your thoughts and prayers. 



COIC Captains Nate Dolce and Aaron Kaufman stop by the Project Management Office to see if housing units will be ready in time. (US Army photo by 1st Lt. Cassidy Eaves)





DAGGER'S EDGE

Keeping an Eye on the Prize

Story by Staff Sgt. Lucas Johnson



C 101 MI Cobras

The Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (TUAV) platoon departed Schweinfurt, Germany on Aug. 6, 2006 with 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, and has been achieving what other platoons couldn't since arriving in theater. The first destination of the platoon was Camp Buehring, Kuwait, where the platoon was utilized to train other TUAV platoons that were inexperienced and unsure of how to operate in a combat zone.

With a collective effort the platoon from Company C, 101st Military Intelligence, helped to ensure that the 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division and 4th Brigade, 25th Infantry Division TUAV platoons were trained on their job as well as mission essential software programs used only in theater.

The platoon moved north to Iraq on Oct. 16. Once on the ground the platoon linked up with their counterparts from Alaska's 172nd Striker Brigade and emplaced their equipment in an expedient fashion. Our Soldiers conducted missions beginning mid-day on the Oct. 17.

The Launch and Recovery Site (LRS) personnel moved to Camp Taji, Iraq, on the Oct. 18, where they were greeted and trained within a week. On the Oct. 26, the Co. C TUAV platoon became the anchor platoon as all the other platoons were tasked to move to other FOBs and camps in order to support their brigades more effectively.

Since the platoon has taken over they have supported nearly 700 missions and 4,000 hours of flight. Their expertise in both flying and maintaining the aircraft has been relied upon heavily by several other units that have since arrived in theater. While 4th Infantry Division was in charge of they were only able to launch a total of 12 mis-


sions a day with six platoons on Camp Taji. With the basis of knowledge of all the operators and maintainers the LRS has since produced a 150% increase in missions with only four platoons at their location. With the increase to 16 missions a day 1st Cavalry Division is able to support 96 hours of flights a day.

While conducting missions the operators at the mission site have enabled the



1st Lt Charlie Ladrillono of Charlie Company C, 101st Military Intelligence Battalion, writes times on the board for the day's missions. (US Army photo by 1st Sgt. David Marbut, of Co C, 101 MI Bn.)

company and brigade to succeed in their mission to find, capture, and neutralize insurgents in our area.

In the first month of operations in theater, the platoon has flown over 800 hours and has since increased its mission load. The overall success of the platoon is due to a collective effort of everyone in the platoon. 





DAGGER'S EDGE



1-18 Infantry Vanguards

The holidays are over and we just keep pushing another day closer to coming home. All the Soldiers here enjoyed the stockings we received, along with other packages and letters from home. I know all the Soldiers here appreciate everything everyone back home does to help out, especially around the holidays.

We had a day to rest and relax on Christmas, which was one of the greatest gifts we could receive. After Christmas, we moved on to the new year without any big events. Some celebrated the passing of 2006 on the internet with friends and family along with seeing it on the news channels as each time zone celebrated.

In 2007, Company A, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, has taken on some new family. We now have a platoon of Tankers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, attached to us. I would like to give a warm welcome to those Soldiers and their friends and family. They spent a week integrating with Co. A, 1st Bn, 18th Inf. Reg, platoons, learning the new area where they will be working.

Along with our new family, we have also taken on more area here in southwest Baghdad. We have spent time in our newest area of operation to find out how we could affect the area in a positive way. Even with the recent changes we are still making positive steps throughout our area.

We are now back into our regular groove. We are conducting regular patrols, trying to make a difference for the

Vanguards Welcome Newcomers

Story by Spc. James Toth



A Tank from Company A, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, attached to 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, patrols the streets of west Rasheed, Baghdad. (US Army photo by Spc. James Toth)

people in Baghdad. We make the best of everything, even while we are hard at work. The good thing is the hard work makes the time pass quickly.

Even though we're working seven days a week we still get a little time to rest and relax. We like to have fun whenever we get a free moment. Life here isn't all bad, considering all the things this FOB has to offer. It may be the Karaoke Night in the chow hall or Movie Night at the MWR. Thankfully, we have lots of events going on around here that help pass the free time and make it more manageable.



STAY DAGGER STAY ARMY ARMY STRONG





DAGGER'S EDGE

2nd BCT R & R


Story by Capt. David Levasseur

2nd Brigade
Combat Team

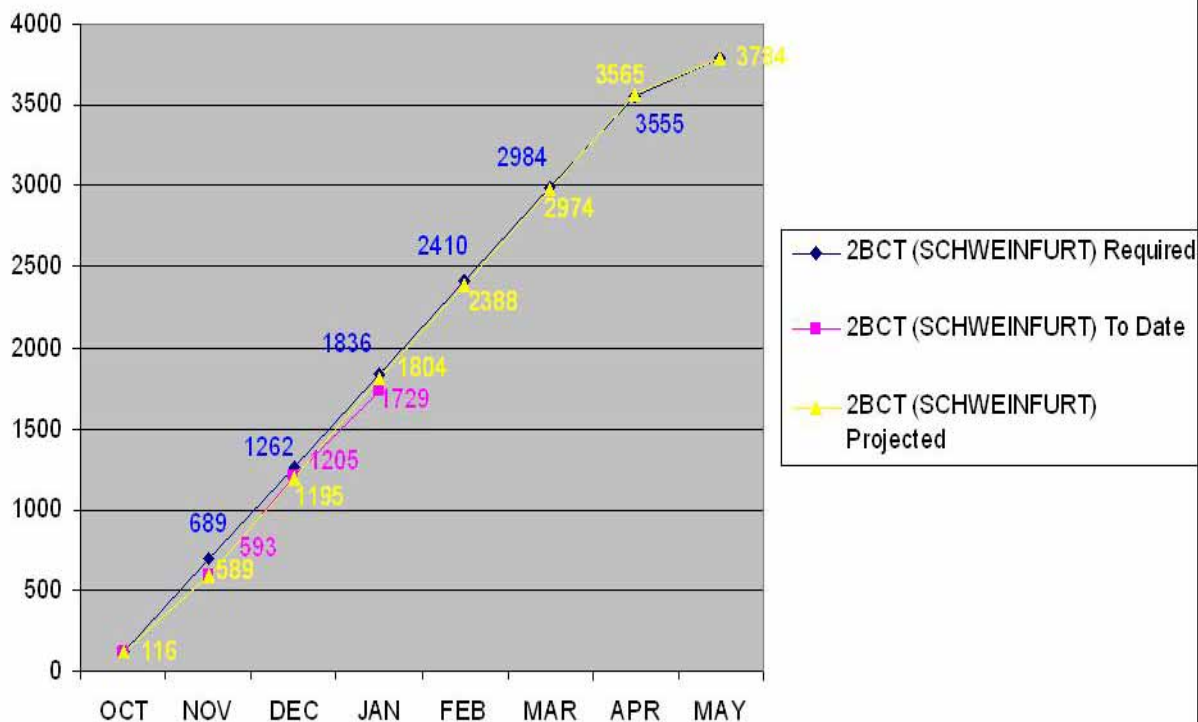
The R&R program is crucial to maintaining the combat readiness of our Soldiers. Every Soldier assigned to or attached to the Dagger Brigade will have the opportunity to go on R&R.

Each and every Soldier and R&R slot is carefully tracked to ensure that every Soldier gets this opportunity. Below and on the next several pages are charts that show the projected R&R numbers that we get from Division, the required numbers that we will have to meet to get every Soldier on R&R, and finally what

we have accomplished so far.

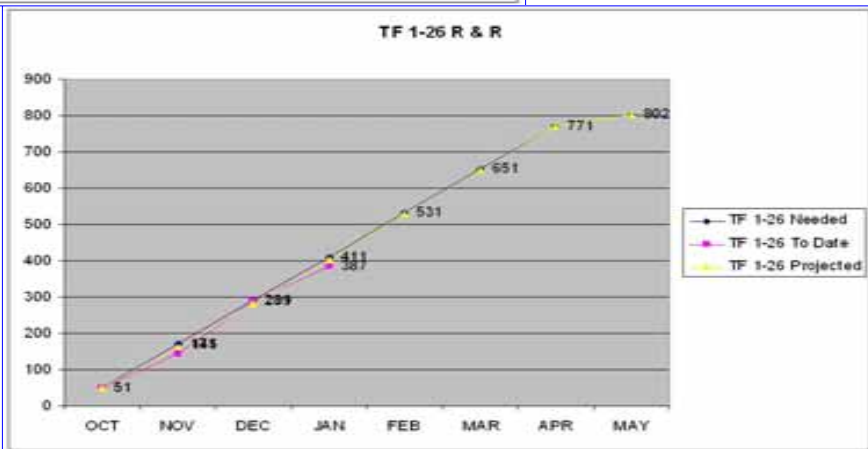
"We are on track," said Capt. Scott Merkle when asked recently about the program, "Everybody is going to get the chance to go." 

2BCT Schweinfurt





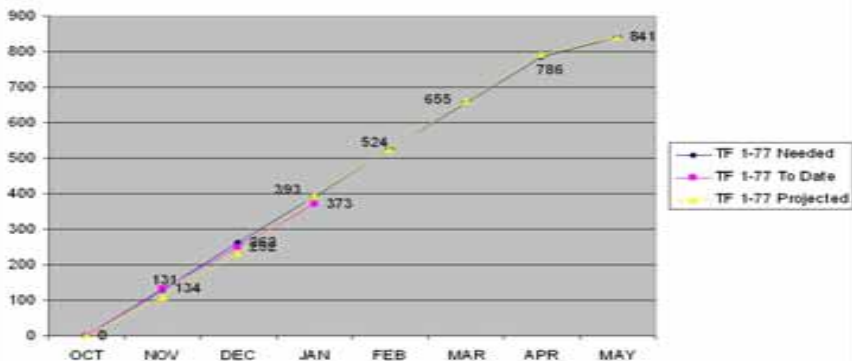
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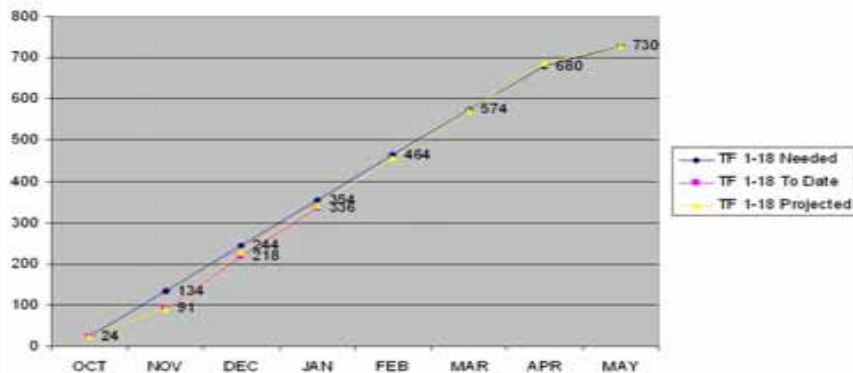


DAGGER'S EDGE

TF 1-77 R & R



TF 1-18 R & R



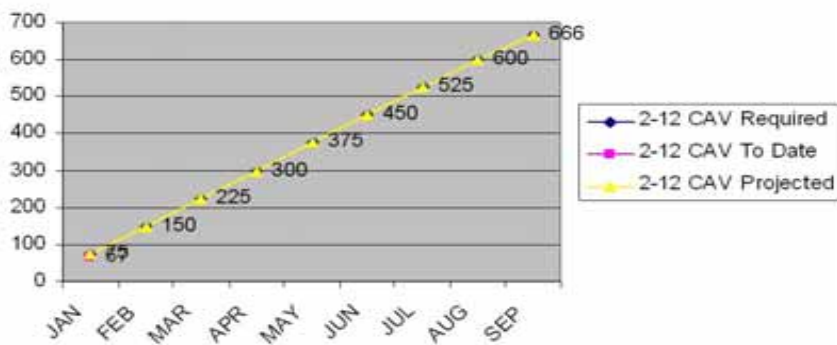
TF 9E R & R



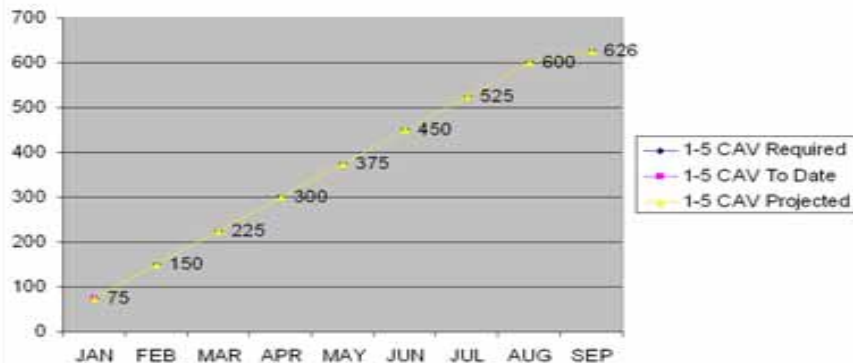


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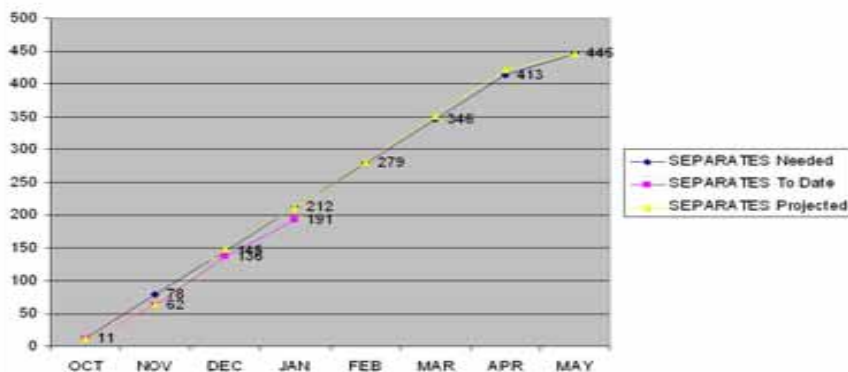
2-12 CAV R & R



TF 1-5 CAV R & R



SEPARATE COMPANIES R & R





DAGGER'S EDGE



Sappers from E Co. pull security and operate the robot while checking out a suspicious vehicle and object in Ghazalyia on January 14, 2007. (US Army photo by 1st Sgt. Lindsey)

' THE GREATEST BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM EVER FORMED.'

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and photographs.**

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